

● External Affairs' February 2005 Activity Report

Summary

This report discusses significant activities in which External Affairs was involved during February 2005

Attachments

None

Detailed Report

Highlights

- Staff coordinated the signing ceremony of an agreement between Metropolitan and the City of Compton to improve water reliability and drought protection of the city and the region for the next 25 years. Chairman Bannister and Interim Chief Executive Officer Gilbert Ivey participated in the signing ceremony with Compton City Councilman and Metropolitan Director Isadore Hall III and Compton Water Department General Manager Kambiz Shoghi.
- The highly anticipated “California Friendly” Model Home program was unveiled to the public at The Preserve - the newest master planned community by Lewis Operating Corporation. The Preserve, in Chino, opened to the public on Feb. 12 and included five residential builders showcasing several of their models that were designed to be “California Friendly.” Both Inland Empire Utilities Agency and Metropolitan were on hand to educate VIPs and the local media on the importance of the new water conservation program with residential builders. Participating residential builders include: Shea Homes, John Laing Homes, Lennar Homes, K. Hovnanian, and Centex Homes.
- Metropolitan’s “California Friendly” landscaping program was included in to the taping of ABC’s Extreme Makeover: Home Edition by Pardee Homes. As part of Pardee Homes commitment to their environmental programs – Living Smart – they included “California Friendly” landscaping into the front and back yard during the show’s taping. Chairman Bannister and directors Phillip Pace and Robert Apodaca, both of West/Central Basin Municipal Water District, were on hand during the taping, from Feb.17-22 in Santa Fe Springs. On Jan. 21, Chairman Bannister presented Michael McGee with a Board Proclamation to honor their achievement on the implementation of “California Friendly” landscaping with this development project.
- Staff and Water Resources Management also coordinated a workshop with Director John Morris and California-American Water to discuss the complexities of local and regional partnerships in water and wastewater. Meeting participants included vice presidents from the Chicago and New York offices of A.T. Kearney, Inc., a global management consulting firm.
- On Feb. 16, Metropolitan hosted more than 130 mayors, city council members and city managers from the California Contract Cities Association at Union Station. During the meeting, Director Bud Lewis welcomed the guests to Metropolitan and spoke briefly about the agency and the important roles its employees have played throughout its history. He also encouraged every city to compete for City Makeover landscaping grants by submitting their applications before the March 30 deadline.

Media, Outdoor Conservation Outreach, Publications, Web, Video

- Staff managed a Presidents Day kids’ fishing derby at Diamond Valley Lake that was publicized in local and regional newspapers as well as flyers that were distributed to local merchants.
- Staff managed a two-month half-price boat rental ad campaign through media outlets in San Diego, Orange, Riverside and Los Angeles counties.
- Staff produced numerous ads and related materials for the Business Outreach program and began working with Business Outreach and the Web team to produce a Web page promoting Metropolitan employment to individuals leaving military service.
- Staff produced a Lunch Money Series program for employees on “California Friendly Gardening 101.”

- Staff worked with Business Services to select qualified vendors to handle district printing and distributed a reader survey to employees to gauge acceptance of employee publications.
- *Straight from the Tap* will soon start airing in Florida on Pinellas County Government television. The Tampa-area station has requested episodes about native landscaping, Diamond Valley Lake and Metropolitan's education and youth programs. Pinellas TV18 broadcasts to 386,400 viewers. The City of Aliso Viejo will begin airing the complete 18-episode *Straight from the Tap* series on its local cable channel in the spring.

Community Outreach, Education and Customer Service

- Staff spoke on DVL to the Hemet Ramona Lions Club meeting and conducted an inspection trip of DVL and Lake Skinner for Jonathan Sassani of Assemblyman Benoit's district office.
- Staff attended several events and meetings with various organizations and representatives including: Southern California Contractors Association, Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Santa Ana Chamber of Commerce, Huntington Beach Chamber of Commerce, California State University at Long Beach, and the Engineering Contractors Association. In addition, staff coordinated the networking session for potential contractors on the Skinner Oxygen Retrofit Project.
- Staff conducted door-to-door visits of about 700 residents in Santa Clarita and Chatsworth who may be affected by work related to the Jensen Plant shutdown and repairs to the Calabazas Feeder and also coordinated the temporary relocation of one homeowner impacted by the Rialto Pipeline work.
- Metropolitan participated in community events or professional association activities with the following organizations: American Water Resources Association, California Contract Cities Association, Leadership Tomorrow, Palo Verde College Foundation, San Fernando Chamber of Commerce, and Valley Industry & Commerce Association.
- Staff attended the Community Partnering Program-sponsored Children's Conference on Watershed at the Ocean Institute in Dana Point. About 180 children participated in the event.
- Staff met with the national education manager for USA Today to discuss potential educational partnerships with Metropolitan.
- Staff met with the following CPP recipients to discuss the status of Metropolitan-sponsored programs: YMCA (Healthy Kids Day), Heal the Bay (Young Scientist Program), San Diego Historical Museum, San Diego Museum of Natural History, Water Conservation Garden, and the Agua Hedionda Lagoon Foundation.
- Staff conducted four CRA inspection trips for Directors Mylne, Apodaca, Morris, and Lewis; one Agricultural trip for Director Loveland; and one DVL trip for Director Record. Additionally, staff conducted a CRA employee inspection trip.
- Staff received 17 Southern California World Water Forum grant applications from universities and community colleges representing nine member agencies in four counties within Metropolitan's service area.
- Staff conducted six pre-screening workshops for more than 2,000 middle and high school students and more than 200 community representatives in support of an African water-related film "Critical Assignment" (endorsed by the United Nations) as part of the 13th Annual Pan African Film and Arts Festival in Los Angeles. The PAFF, Metropolitan, Metropolitan's Black Employee's Association and the Water Replenishment District of Southern California held a reception on Feb. 18 honoring both Director Willard Murray and Interim CEO Gilbert Ivey as high-ranking natural resources management officials in Southern California. More than 125 community and water agency guests attended the reception.
- Staff conducted student workshops at both Mark Keppel High School in Alhambra and Century High School in Santa Ana for a total of 60 students.
- Staff set up and provided lesson plan support for the month-long exhibition of Metropolitan's hands-on water model at the Discovery Science Center. This is another step in fulfilling Metropolitan's water education collaboration with the Municipal Water District of Orange County.
- There were 7,323 visitors to the Clayton Record Viewpoint and 1,176 visitors to the DVL Visitor Center in February.

- Staff conducted 10 DVL Education Program Field Trips for 340 elementary and middle school students from eight schools. In addition, staff conducted two student workshops (71 students) for Banning and Beaumont schools, just outside Metropolitan's service area.
- About 120 teachers of grades K-12 from Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Diego Counties received in-service training.
- Staff has sent rules and guidelines to all Member Agencies for the 2005 "Water is Life" Student Art Contest. The categories will be split this year. While the K-5 will remain a poster contest, grades 6-12 will pilot an approach allowing computer-generated art and multi-media artwork, in addition to the secondary contest theme being expanded to include expressions of water in a "global" context.
- Staff began a partnership with the City of Riverside to provide Metropolitan's 4th and 5th grade materials, Admiral Splash and Water Ways, respectively, in a series of workshops.
- Staff conducted the second Technical Workshop at Union Station for the Solar Cup 2005 competition. More than 150 students and teachers from the 30 school teams attended. Metropolitan's Solar Cup staff and the Cal Poly, Pomona Solar Engineering Department are evaluating the first technical reports submitted by the teams.
- The second Solar Cup 2005 newsletter was completed and distributed to all participants and to Member Agencies.

Legislative and Government Relations

(Complete and updated reports for Sacramento and Washington, D.C., are given orally during the Communication and Legislation Committee.)

Regional

- On Feb. 2, Metropolitan staff from Water System Operations and External Affairs met with the staff of Representative Gary Miller's office on the Central Pool Augmentation (CPA) Project. Metropolitan briefed the Congressman's new District Director Steve Thornton and District Representative David Varnam on the CPA benefits and possible impacts to the 42nd Congressional District. Issues included the construction impacts to the cities and county residents in the Cleveland National Forest area (located within the 42nd Congressional District) and also how future notification and outreach should be handled with the Congressman's office.
- On Feb. 11, staff assisted as Director David Farrar hosted a table of business leaders at the 116th annual installation dinner for the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. In spite of heavy rains that night, well over 600 business leaders and elected officials came to honor outgoing chair George Kieffer, Partner of Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP, and to welcome incoming chair Christopher Martin, CEO of AC Martin Partners.
- On Feb. 17, the Engineering Contractors Association held its quarterly Board of Directors meeting at Metropolitan's building at Union Station. Chief Operating Officer Debra Man, Executive Legislative Representative Kathy Cole, and Capital Investment Program (CIP) Manager Tobin Tellers briefed the ECA directors about Metropolitan's CIP and state legislative issues.
- On Feb. 18, Director Steve Veres and Metropolitan staff hosted a table at the 84th annual installation luncheon for the San Fernando Chamber of Commerce where Assemblywoman Cindy Montanez was the keynote speaker. Metropolitan's guests included former directors representing San Fernando (Hugo Mejia and Sergio Rascon), and officers from the United Chambers of Commerce, Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley, and the Valley Industry and Commerce Association.

Sacramento

- On Feb. 15, a Joint Informational Hearing of the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee and Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 2 was held on the Oversight of CALFED Financing Plan: Policy and Fiscal Issues.
- On Feb. 16, the Assembly Public Employees, Retirement and Social Security Committee held a hearing on The State of California's Public Pension Systems. The Assembly Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee

No. 4 held a hearing on the Budget Implications of the Privatization of Public Pensions: Defined Benefit vs. Defined Contribution.

- The Feb. 22 deadline for the introduction of legislation prompted the introduction of significant legislation, including a comprehensive water policy bill by Senator Sheila Kuehl (D-Los Angeles), chair of the recently formed Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee. Other bills staff has seen or expects to find in the crush of last-minute introductions includes CALFED finance legislation introduced by Senator Mike Machado (D-Linden), as well as a parks, open space and clean water bond by Senate Budget Committee Chair Wes Chesbro (D-Arcata). Senator Deborah Ortiz (D-Sacramento) is expected to re-introduce her special district “reform” legislation from last year. Alternative local government “sunshine” legislation, which would affect not only special districts, but also cities, counties and school districts, is expected to be introduced by Assembly Local Government Chair Simon Salinas (D-Salinas).

Washington, D.C.

- On Feb. 8, the President released his \$2.5 trillion 2006 budget request to Congress. Some highlights of interest to the water industry include:
 - \$35 million for CALFED, about a third of which goes to storage planning, and \$52.2 million for the Central Valley Restoration Fund;
 - \$30 million for Water 2025 – more than 50 percent above the amount appropriated by Congress in FY 2005. The program promotes voluntary water banking and other market-based water management measures, the use of new technology for water conservation and efficiency (including desalination research and development), system optimization reviews of water delivery infrastructure, research to lower the cost of new water treatment technologies, and increased cooperation and collaboration among federal, state, tribal, and private organizations through the removal of institutional barriers;
 - \$10.2 million for Title XVI projects and planning; and
 - \$28 million to remediate uranium mill tailings at the Atlas Site in Moab, Utah.
- On Feb. 15-17, several Metropolitan directors attended Association of California Water Agencies’ Federal Symposium in Washington, D.C. In addition to meetings scheduled by ACWA, staff arranged for a meeting at the White House with Ruben Barrales, Deputy Assistant to the President & Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, to brief him on concerns about the on-going drought on the Colorado River, including the need for federal spending on the construction of new reservoirs on the lower basin to help offset the impact of the drought. They also discussed Metropolitan’s support for the President’s budget request for \$28 million for the clean-up of the Atlas mine site in Moab Utah, expressing the need to have the toxic materials removed from their dangerously close proximity to the Colorado River as part of any Department of Energy solution to this problem. Metropolitan directors also met with Senate Energy Committee staff to discuss the implementation of CALFED, the need for drought and water quality measures on the Colorado River and Metropolitan’s continued commitment to conservation and carrying out the Bureau of Reclamation’s regional water use efficiency program throughout its service area.
- During the Feb 15-17 meetings, Chairman Bannister met with key members of Congress in order to introduce himself and present Metropolitan’s vision for federal legislative opportunities in the 109th Congress. Those with whom the chairman met include: Sen.. Dianne Feinstein (D-California); Sen.. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), chairman of the Senate Energy Subcommittee on Water and Power; Sen.. Jon Kyl (R-Arizona); Sen.. Robert Bennett (R-Utah); and some key members of the House of Representatives, including Appropriations Committee Chairman Jerry Lewis (R-Redlands); Majority Deputy Whip John Doolittle (R-Roseville), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Water and Power George Radanovich (R-Mariposa); Grace Napolitano (D-Norwalk), the ranking Democrat on the House Subcommittee on Water and Power. He also met with a number of other key members with an interest in Metropolitan’s programs, including: Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Huntington Beach), and Homeland Security Chairman Rep. Christopher Cox (R-Newport Beach).